(d) its impact on the employees and the Unions' reaction to the proposed slash in the interest rate?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA) : (a) and (b) The rate of interest for the Employees' Provident Fund subscribers for the year 2002-03 was 9.5% per annum. The rate of interest for the current financial year has not been declared so far.

(c) The investments are being made by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation, in accordance with the investment pattern notified by the Central Government from time to time.

(d) Does not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

UN Charter's approval for Military Action

*673. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that according to the UN Secretary-General's statement in Hague on the 10th March any military action outside the Council would not be in conformity with the UN Charter;

(b) if so, in what manner the UN Charter deals with such a situation if it actually happens; and

(c) Government's views in this regard and the diplomatic steps it visualises to avoid such a situation and for maintaining universal peace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) to (c) Speaking in the specific context of Iraq, which was an issue before the Security Council on March 10, the UN Secretary General said "If the US and others were to go outside the Council and take military action, it would not be in conformity with the Charter".

The Charter envisages use of force in case of self-defence or as authorised by the Security Council under Chapter VII.

The Government had expressed its sense of deep anguish at the resort to military action in Iraq, which in its view lacked justification and was avoidable. Government has been in contact with other Governments on a more effective role by the UN in avoiding such situations and in strengthening international peace and security.

Foodgrains in Central Pool

*674. SHRI MURLI DEORA : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) the quantity of rice and wheat lying in Central Pool since last five years, year-wise and what is the present stock position;

(b) the reasons for keeping the old stock for such a long period;

(c) the quantity of stock which has become unfit for human consumption and also reduced due to pilferage, etc.; and

(d) the quantity of stocks required to be maintained annually as per the norms?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV) : (a) The stocks of foodgrains in the Central Pool, as on 1st April, in the last five years (including in the current year) were as under :

(figures in lakh tonnes)

Date	Rice	Wheat	Total
1.4.1998	130.47	50.76	181.23
1.4.1999	121.83	96.57	218.40
1.4.2000	157.19	131.87	289.06
1.4.2001	231.91	215.04	446.95
1.4.2002	249.12	260.39	509.51
1.4.2003	171.57	156.45	328.02

(b) Out of the total stocks in the Central Pool, as on 1st April, 2003, stocks to the extent of 260.27 lakh tonnes (79.35%) were three or less than three years old. The stocks of foodgrains had accumulated during the period 1999-2000 to 2002-03 due to record procurement and relatively low offtake of foodgrains from the Central Pool.

(c) The quantity of damaged foodgrains which had become unfit for human consumption as on 1st April, 2003 was 1.33 lakh tonnes, comprising 1.05 lakh tonnes of rice and 0.28 lakh tonnes of wheat. The value of foodgrains lost due to theft/pilferage during the year 2000-01 was Rs. 30.23 lakhs.

(d) The quantity of stocks to be maintained in the Central Pool under the buffer norms as prescribed by the Government of India, as on the 1st of each

quarter is given as under :

(figures in lakh tonnes)

	1st January	1st April	1st July	1st October
Rice	84.00	118.00	100.00	65.00
Wheat	84.00	40.00	143.00	116.00
TOTAL :	168.00	158.00	243.00	181.00

Telephone System in Delhi

† *675. SHRI LAJPAT RAI :
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a comprehensive improvement is required in telephone system in Delhi;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government have formulated any scheme to bring this system to the international level; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE) : (a) and (b) Improvement in telecommunication system is a continuous process due to obsolescence and the need to keep pace with the rapid advances in telecom technology.

(c) and (d) The erstwhile service providing functions of Government on telecom side are being carried out by MTNL in Delhi. Following actions have been taken by MTNL :

(i) Replacement of 120 K lines electromechanical, 158 K lines analog electronic exchanges 8K Analog TAX, 17K E-10B TAX and 161.3 K lines of old digital E-10B local exchanges upto 31st March, 2003 with new technology exchanges.

(ii) Inter exchange network which was earlier working on copper cables has been replaced by Optical Fibre Cable network.

(iii) New technology access network in local network has been introduced to reduce the long copper cable loops by installing a larger number of Remote Switching Units (RSUs), Digital Line Concentrators (DLCs), Cordect and Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) exchanges.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.